

UNCLASSIFIED

EXCISE

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BEIRUT 02913 01 OF 03 090912Z

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /031 W
-----224276 090916Z /12

O 090801Z MAY 81 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

IM/IPS/CM/IR

Date: 11/3/97

() RELEASE

() DECLASSIFY

EO Citations

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IN PART

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FOIA Exemptions

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() CLASSIFY as () S or () C Sec.

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E.O. 12065
DECAPTIONED

FROM AMBASSADOR HABIB

E.O. 12065: RDS-1-3-4 5/8/01 (DRAPER, MORIS)

TAGS: PEPR, XF, MOPS, LE, SY, IS

SUBJECT: HABIB MISSION: INITIAL TALKS IN BEIRUT

1. [REDACTED]

2. BY THE END OF FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 8, I HAD COMPLETED EXTENSIVE TALKS WITH THE PRESIDENT AND KEY LEBANESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, AS WELL AS WITH LEADERS OF VIRTUALLY ALL MAJOR FACTIONS. THESE TALKS BEGAN ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 7, IMMEDIATELY AFTER MY ARRIVAL IN BEIRUT.

3. AS THIS CABLE IS BEING DRAFTED, HEAVY ARTILLERY, MORTAR AND MACHINE-GUN FIRE ARE PROVIDING NOISY INTERRUPTIONS. IT MAY BE TYPICAL OF THE COMPLEX LEBANESE PROBLEM THAT AS MANY AS FIVE FACTIONS MAY BE INVOLVED IN THIS GUNFIRE: THE LEBANESE ARMY, THE SYRIAN ARMY, THE MURABITUN, THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ARMY, ALONG WITH A SHI'A FACTION AND AN IRAQI-SUPPORTED GROUP, WHICH MAY HAVE

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STARTED THE CLASHES TODAY, DDAWING THE THE OTHERS LATER. EVERY LEBANESE SPOKE, SOME WITH RESIGNATION, OF THE TRAUMA OF THE CONSTANT VIOLENCE.

4. AFTER MEETING WITH THE HEAD OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, WALID JUMBLATT, THREE PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTIES FROM ZAHLE AND A DELEGATION OF SHI'A DEPUTIES FROM SOUTH LEBANON ON SATURDAY MORNING, MAY 9, I WILL BE GOING TO DAMASCUS, BEARING MIND THE FOLLOWING TENTATIVE

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CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS:

-- (A) I HAVE BEEN PRESSING HARD FOR SPECIFIC PROPOSALS AND IDEAS FOR CALMING THE SITUATION IN THE BEKAA AND PREVENTING A CLASH BETWEEN ISRAELI AND SYRIAN FORCES OVER THE QUESTION OF THE SYRIAN FORCES ON THE SANNIIN MOUNTAIN RANGE AND THE SAM MISSILES. WHILE VIRTUALLY EVERY LEBANESE LEADER--WHETHER AN OFFICIAL OR INDEPENDENT--HAS IN TURN PRESSED FOR IMMEDIATE U.S. ATTENTION TO LEBANON'S LONG-RANGE PROBLEMS, INCLUDING IN THE SOUTH OR VIS-A-VIS THE PALESTINIANS, I HAVE CONSISTENTLY FORCED THEM TO RETURN TO THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS AT HAND TO FOCUS ON THE HARD ISSUES. AS NOTED BELOW, I SEE SOME SLIGHT OPPORTUNITIES AS WELL AS SERIOUS OBSTACLES TO A WORKABLE MODUS VIVENDI.

-- (B) SPECIFICALLY, I HAVE BEEN STRESSING THE PROPOSITION THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RETURN TO A PREVIOUS STATUS QUO WHICH, DESPITE ITS IMPERFECTIONS AND RISKS, DID NOT POSE SERIOUS DANGERS TO THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF ANY PARTY, INCLUDING SYRIA, AND OFFERED OPPORTUNITIES FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE SYRIAN-LEBANESE DIALOGUE. IN THE CONTEXT OF THAT PROPOSAL, PRESIDENT SARKIS, FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS, MARONITE LEADERS CAMILLE CHAMOUN, PIERRE, BASHIR AND AMINE GEMAYEL, PLUS PRIME MINISTER WAZZAN (IN PRINCIPLE, WITH SERIOUS RESERVATIONS), WOULD

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SUPPORT THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE LEBANESE ARMY TO BOTH THE SANNIIN RIDGELINE AND INTO THE CITY OF ZAHLE, IN RETURN FOR: (1) THE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SANNIIN RIDGELINE OF THE SYRIANS, THE PHALANGE, AND THE PPS MILITIAS; AND (2) RELIEF OF THE SYRIAN BLOCKADE OF THE CITY OF ZAHLE.

-- (C) THE USE OF LEBANON'S INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES IN ZAHLE AND ELSEWHERE, IN LIEU OF THE LEBANESE ARMY, IS ALSO FEASIBLE FOR NEGOTIATING PURPOSES, ALTHOUGH SOME QUESTION WHETHER THIS FORCE IS NUMERICALLY ADEQUATE TO DO THE JOB AND ALSO HANDLE ITS OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES ELSEWHERE IN LEBANON.

-- (D) ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SYRIANS ARE SENDING STRONG SIGNALS OF OPPOSITION TO ANY EXPANSION OF LEBANESE ARMY AUTHORITY OR DEPLOYMENTS BEYOND THE STATUS QUO OF APRIL 1, THE ANTIONAL MOVEMENT (NM), EARLIER ON MAY 8, ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE--APPARENTLY AT SYRIA'S INSTIGATION--OPPOSING DEPLOYMENT OF THE ARMY TO THE HOT SPOTS. MULIM LEADERS ALSO VOICED DEEP DISTRUST OF THE ARMY'S RELIABILITY AND OBJECTIVITY, AFTER ITS HAVING BEEN INTIMIDATED BY THE PHALANGE LAST YEAR.

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1801

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

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-- (E) MUSLIM LEADERS GENERALLY, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO IN SOME RESPECTS WOULD LIKE TO BE HELPFUL, DO NOT WANT TO DO ANYTHING THAT WOULD HUMILIATE THE SYRIANS OR CAUSE THEM TO LOSE FACE. THEY ALSO ARE IRRITATED WITH THE MILITANT CHRISTIANS WHO, SOME OF THEM HAVE SUGGESTED, GOT THEMSELVES INTO A MESS OF THEIR OWN MAKING. THEY ALSO ACCUSE THE ISRAELIS OF DELIBERATELY SABOTAGING LEBANESE EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE SYRIANS AND TO WORK TOWARD A NATIONAL ENTENTE AMONG LEBANESE FACTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, FORMER PRIME MINISTER SAEB SALAM GAVE ME AN IMPROTANT CONCESSION WHEN HE AGREED--ON BEHALF OF HIS MODERATE MUSLIM COLLEAGUES-- THAT THEY WOULD NOT OBJECT PUBLICLY TO THE CONCEPT OF PUTTING OFFICIAL LEBANESE ARMY OR INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES INTO THESE KEY AREAS UNTIL THEY HAVE LEARNED OF THE SYRIAN RESPONSE TO MY PROPOSALS. THIS WILL GIVE ME A SLIGHT ADVANTAGE IN DAMASCUS THAT I MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE HAVE, EVEN WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT VIRTUALLY ALL SHADES OF LEBANESE OPINION ARE FAIRLY SURE THAT THE SYRIANS WILL NOT GIVE AN INCH. WE SHALL SEE.

--(F) THERE IS ALSO A GENERAL CONSENSUS THAT ALL THE

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PHALANGE FIGHTING MEN WHO WERE INTRODUCED INTO ZAHLE FROM THE OUTSIDE, THE SO-CALLED "STRANGERS," WOULD

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HAVE TO BE WITHDRAWN AS PART OF A PACKAGE DEAL. I HAVE NOT ADDRESSED SPECIFICALLY THE IDEA OF REMOVING ARMED MEN WHO ARE NATIVE TO THE CITY, SINCE MILITIA LEADER BASHIR GEMAYEL WOULD NEVER AGREE, BUT ALSO BECAUSE NO ONE RAISED IT. IN SHORT, THIS LATTER ISSUE COULD BE FINESSED.

-- (G) BY COMPARISON, THE PROBLEM OF THE SAM BATTERIES IN THE BEKAA REGION APPEARS EVEN MORE MORE INTRACTABLE, AS ANTICIPATED. THE MUSLIM LEADERS TRY TO JUSTIFY THE SYRIAN DEPLOYMENT OF SAMES AS A REASONABLE DEFENSIVE MILITARY MOVE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. WHEN COMBINED WITH THEIR DEEP RESENTMENT OVER HIGHLY VISIBLE ISRAELI-PHALANGE COLLABORATION WE CAN NOT EXPECT ANY HELP FROM THAT QUARTER.

I AM DEEPLY FEARFUL THAT ISRAEL WILL HURT THE CHRISTIAN CAUSE BY ATTACKING THE SYRIANS AT THE MISSILE SITES AND ON THE SANNIIN HEIGHTS. ISRAELI ACTIONS IN THEIR OPINION WOULD MOBILIZE EVEN MODERATE ARAB QUARTERS IN SUPPORT OF SYRIA AND THEREBY COMPROMISE THE SENSE OF SECURITY AND ACCEPTANCE THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS DEEPLY WANTED. PREDICTIONS THAT ISRAELI MILITARY ACTION WOULD MOBILIZE ARAB WORLD OPINION AND ALSO ISOLATE THE U.S. WERE ALSO VOICED BY THE MUSLIMS, INCLUDING SHI'A LEADER AL-ASSAD.

-- (H) AT THE SAME TIME, I ALSO WERE CONVINCED THAT THE SYRIANS WANT TO "OVERWHELM" AND SUBJUGATE LEBANON PERMANENTLY. BY GETTING THE TWO MEN ON THURSDAY NIGHT TO FOCUS ON MEANS TO AVERT EITHER OF THE TWO CALAMITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT CRISIS, THE STAGE WAS SET FOR A PRODUCTIVE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS ON FRIDAY MORNING.

-- (I) AT THIS MEETING, SARKIS GAVE MEAN IMPRESSIVE DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY TO NEGOTIATE A DEAL WITH THE

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SYRIANS AND IN FACT ENCOURAGED ME TO BUILD ON WHATEVER MOMENTUM DEVELOPED TO SECURE OTHER SYRIAN CONCESSIONS ELSEWHERE, INCLUDING ALLOWING ADDED DEPLOYMENTS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY IN BEIRUT. I DO NOT, HOWEVER, PROPOSE TO JEOPARDIZE MOVEMENT ON THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE IMMEDIATE ISRAELI-SYRIAN CONFRONTATION IN FAVOR OF PROBLEMS IN OTHER AREAS, DESPITE THE DESIRE OF SOME LEBANESE ELEMENTS TO BROADEN THE DEMANDS ON THE SYRIANS. THAT COULD BE TOO MUCH FOR A SINGLE BITE BUT CAN BE KEPT IN MIND AS A FUTURE POSSIBILITY. (VERBATIM TEXT OF THE

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SPECIFIC SARKIS PROPOSALS, AS DELIVERED FRIDAY EVENING, ARE REPRODUCED IN PARA. 7 BELOW, WITH TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC NAMES AS GIVEN.)

5. AS CAN BE SEEN FROM THE FOREGOING, MY INTENTION IS TO TRY TO MOVE FORWARD WITH AN ACCEPTABLE DEAL FOR THE SANNIIN HEIGHTS AND ZAHLE, SINCE THE TWO ISSUES ARE INTERTWINED POLITICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY, AND EXPAND ON WHATEVER PROGRESS CAN BE DEVELOPED TO DEAL WITH THE MISSILE PROBLEM. WE ARE CONCENTRATING ON GETTING TO THE STATUS QUO ANTE IN AS BRIEF A TIME AS POSSIBLE. I MUST POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT WE ARE GETTING MANY AUTHORITATIVE NEGATIVE SIGNALS FROM THE SYRIANS ABOUT ANY REPEAT ANY LEBANESE ARMY DEPLOYMENT. I WILL HAVE TO SEE HOW THE SYRIANS REACT TO MY URGINGS.

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIAC IMMEDIATE 1802
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

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6. I WANT TO STRESS, MOREOVER, THAT THESE ARE ONLY INTERIM VIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS, AND I AM SENDING THEM NOW TO INDICATE THE DIRECTION WE HAVE BEEN GOING AND THE REACTIONS SO FAR IN LEBANON.

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7. BEGIN TEXT OF SARKIS PROPOSALS:

- (1) THE PEAKS OF SANNINE
- WITHDRAWAL OF ADF FROM THE PEAKS UP TO 3KILOMETERS AS WELL AS THE ARMED MILITIAMEN (RIGHTISTS AND OTHERS WHO ARE ENGAGED IN THE AREA OF THE HILLS.
- TAKING OVER OF THE PEAKS BY LAF (WITHOUT HEAVY EQUIPMENT).
- (2) ZAHLE
- THE RELIEF OF THE CITY OF ZAHLE UP TO THREE KILOMETERS AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN COMBATANTS.
- CONTROL OF THE ROAD OF MAALAPA - HOUEL AL-OUNARA (NOTE: PROBABLY INDUSTRIAL AREA ROAD OF MA'ALAQA - KHUSH AL-UMARA) BY LEBANESE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES.
- LEBANESE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES WILL BE DEPLOYED INSIDE THE CITY.
- (3) AIRPORT ROAD

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- REPLACEMENT OF ADF POSITIONS BY LAF ALONG THE ROAD FROM HADEGH (PROBABLY HADITH) TO COUIFAT (PROBABLY SHWAYFAT) TO THE AIRPORT.
- (4) BEIRUT (DEMARCATIION AREA)
- WITHDRAWAL OF PLA (PALESTINIAN LEIBERATION ARMY) FROM THE DEMARCATION LINE.
- DEPLOYMENT OF LAF ALONG THE DEMARCATION LINE, UNTIL THE SEAPORT.
- WITHDRAWAL OF ALL ARMED ELEMENTS FROM THE DEMARCATION AREA UP TO A DEPTH OF ONE KILOMETER FROM EACH SIDE OF THE DEMARCATION LINE.
- N.B. THE ADF MAY SUPPORT THE LAF PARTICULARLY IN THE WESTER AREA (ADF, IN THAT CASE, WOULD BE COMPOSED BY SYRIAN FORCES ONLY). END TEXT.

8 COMMENT: IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT ALL LEBANESE -- ONE WAY OR ANOTHER -- INDICATED THAT THE MISSILE BATTERY PROBLEM WAS A PROBLEM FOR THE SYRIANS AND ISRAELIS, NOT THE LEBANESE.
DEAN

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